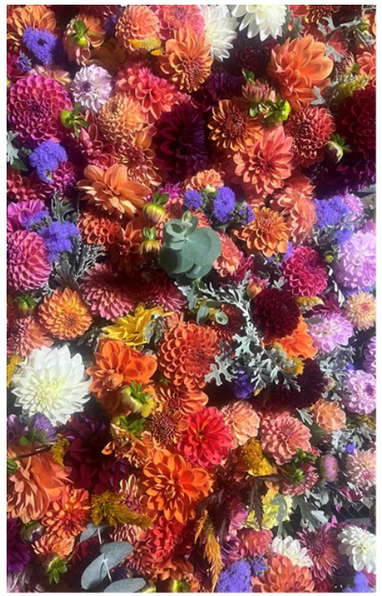
Spreading Joy by Josh Geissinger

As I was growing up, I always valued multigenerational relationships. I spent a lot of time with my cousins, grandparents and aunts and uncles. I also enjoyed cultivating relationships with other generations at church. As the years went on, I married someone that works in end of life care and is extremely passionate about it. This only deepened my desire to connect with those "in their golden years".

When the pandemic hit and lock down happened, my heart broke for our senior citizens and nursing home residents who couldn't have visitors. About the same time all of this was happening, I decided to expand my cut flower garden at my house. The first year, I grew sunflowers and zinnias. That year, I went around leaving jars of zinnias on neighbors' porches and giving them to family. I gave about 30 that first year. The next year, I grew a more diverse selection of cut flowers including dahlias, celosia and others as well as using flowers from my mom's abundant flower field. I continued giving flowers to neighbors as well as bringing them to church events and family functions. In the fall of 2022, I took a basket with about 5 jars of dahlias to a local nursing home. The residents were so excited by the blooms, I just knew I had to go back. Unfortunately, the season was coming to an end, but I made sure to head back the next summer. As the years have gone by and my "program" has evolved, I've done less neighborhood home deliveries. I do still give flowers to elderly neighbors, however I focus more on nursing home deliveries. There are two local nursing homes that I regularly deliver flowers to. So far for the 2026 season, I have given more than 500 jars of flowers to individuals!

One of the amazing things is most of the flowers that I grow are "cut and come again". That means, the more that I cut them the more flowers they produce! It reminds me of a song that we sang as kids, "love is something if you give it away, give it away…give it away you end up having more!" It never ceases to amaze me the impact a simple jar of flowers can make! I know for some, the days are long and the visitors are few, but a simple act of kindness can let them know someone cares. My favorite part is when someone tells me " I have no money to buy them" I can tell them, that's ok, because they are a gift to you! My hope is always that I can brighten their day, and I know that I have!



GROWTH MATTERS
SWAMP MENNONITE CHURCH
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Specific Instructions by Pastor Nathan

We had minor issues with both of our cars in mid-October. When it comes to mechanical things, I know enough to be dangerous.

After some diagnostic work, YouTube videos, and car repair forums, I got to work. Then, I reached a point where I was in over my head. I had found general instructions for the job, but they weren't enough.

Thankfully, in one instance I could call my brother and with the other I called a technician at the Battery Outlet. Between the general instructions from the internet and specific direction from experts, I was able to get the job done.

In the book of Acts, we see the early church learning how to walk in the Spirit. I read an article recently that documented 85 decisions made by the early church. In 14 of these decisions, Jesus directly intervened to give them specific instructions.

In our church covenant, "*We confess Jesus as … the risen Lord to be followed who is also the Head of the church.*"

In Scripture, we find general instructions that Jesus gives for all people. But as Jesus rules and reigns, he wants to give specific instructions to advance his kingdom today.

Ultimately, God is sovereign. Jesus is ruling and reigning and will ensure that his purposes are accomplished. At the same time, we can choose to partner with Jesus in building his kingdom or to reject Jesus and partner with Satan in doing evil.

God never desires evil; he only desires good. When bad things happen, it isn't true to say that it was God's will. He allowed it to happen, and ultimately will use it for his purposes, but it does not mean that he wanted or caused it.

Those who are parents have experienced this. We put guardrails in place for our children. We have ultimate control and responsibility for how a day, week, and year play out. And if our children cross the guardrails, we intervene to ensure things move in a way that is ultimately good for them. But that does not mean that we agree with every one of their decisions!

In Scripture, we find God's general instructions for all people. Scripture is the authoritative source and standard for discerning between good and evil. The Spirit will not communicate anything today that contradicts Scripture.

We can think of Scripture as the guardrails God has put in place for us, never to be crossed. Or as the general instructions for us as we work with him in building the kingdom.

However, there are times when we need specific instructions. Scripture itself teaches us that God wants to communicate this to us through the Spirit.

In John 16:12-13, Jesus says to the disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

Our task, as we walk in the Spirit of Jesus, is to listen and obey. We obey all that Jesus has revealed to us in Scripture and throughout our lives. We also seek Jesus each day, asking what specific ways he wants to direct our lives.

We do this as individuals and as a community of faith. This coming year, we are going to engage in a time of congregational discernment. We are asking God to reveal the paths that he has for us to walk in. We have a vision discernment team that is praying and planning ways to help us listen for the voice of the Spirit, test that in community, and then follow Jesus where he leads.

We seek, we wait for the voice of Jesus, and we live, obeying everything he has said in the past and direction he gives in the present.

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Church Board Highlights

The September 17 Church Board meeting started with Jay Geissinger leading a devotional on Psalm 34. He invited us to consider how God delivers us in our times of need.

Most of the meeting was spent reviewing the Board Policy manual and making updates to reflect the change to LMC. Laura thanked the Board for all of their work during the transition from Mosaic to LMC.

Time was spent discussing by-law changes, to be recommended to the congregation, as the final step of formalizing the transfer to LMC. Since we are already proposing a by-law change this year, it was decided to also recommended changes to the Church Board discernment process. These proposed changes will be announced in November and voted on in the December member meeting.

Pastor Nathan presented the Membership Team Report to finish out the annual covenant process. He also reviewed plans for Leadership Retreat and invited leaders to participate in a day of prayer at Living Streams Ranch the day before, as they were able.

Jim Landis closed the meeting in prayer.

Christmas Caroling

Everyone is invited to go Christmas caroling on Friday, December 18. We will be meeting at the church at 6:30 pm. There will be refreshments back at the church afterwards.

Code Blue in Quakertown: A Community Caring for Our Neighbors by Bill Longacre

As the cold winter months approach, it is important to remember our neighbors who may not have a warm, safe place to sleep. Code Blue is a cold-weather emergency response that helps protect individuals experiencing homelessness when dangerously low temperatures create a risk to their health and safety.

In Quakertown, the Upper Bucks Code Blue shelter operates at the Quakertown Masonic Lodge, located at 501 W. Broad Street. The shelter operates during the winter season when weather conditions meet the criteria for activation. For current opening information, call the shelter hotline at 267-450-5191 or visit https://upperbuckscodeblue.org/.

As a church family, we can make a difference by praying for those facing homelessness, sharing information about available shelter services, and supporting local outreach efforts through donations or volunteer opportunities. Our church budget supports the shelter financially through your regular offerings. We recently had a collection for 'take along' snacks, which are given to guests. We also have several members who volunteer at the shelter.

Let us remember the words of Matthew 25:40: *"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

May we continue to show Christ's love through compassion, generosity, and practical care for those in our community who need it most.

Swamp's New Kingdom Partner by Cindy Longacre

Fostering Hope is a volunteer-run, donation-based 501(c)(3) non-profit that services foster families and children in Pennsylvania. They provide free resources to children experiencing foster care, foster families, kinship families, pre- and post- adoptive families, young adults who have recently aged out and biological families on safety plans.

The Upper Bucks Chapter is currently located at St. Paul's UCC Church in Sellersville. It opened in 2022 and serves 100+ children per year.

Dignity Duffels, instead of trash bags, are given to children who are taken from their homes unexpectedly, sometimes in the middle of the night. Bags of Hope are given as a special gift to each child. They contain items like a toothbrush, toothpaste, lotion, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant etc. Many times, children come to their temporary foster homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Foster families can come to the Foster- Share Closet at St. Paul's to get car seats, strollers, mattresses, diapers/wipes, coats, clothes of all sizes, pajamas, personal items, books and toys.

Swamp has financially supported Fostering Hope for the past several years. By doing so, we have provided critical resources to children that desperately need it and to those who are willing and able to turn their families into foster families. Thank you!

For more information, please visit their website at www.fosteringhopepa.org